

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES - COUNTRYSIDE ADULT HOME, SOCIAL SERVICES AND YOUTH BUREAU

DATE: NOVEMBER 28, 2011

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS LOEB
KENNY
BENTLEY
STRAINER
WOOD
MCDEVITT
SOKOL

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:
SUZANNE WHEELER, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
JULIE MONTERO, FISCAL MANAGER
CHRIS HANCHETT, FOSTER CARE SUPERVISOR
DEANNA PARK, DIRECTOR, COUNTRYSIDE ADULT HOME
MARGARET SING-SMITH, YOUTH BUREAU DIRECTOR
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
JOANN MCKINSTRY, ASSISTANT TO THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISORS GIRARD
TAYLOR
THOMAS
VANNESS
REPRESENTING THE COUNCIL FOR PREVENTION OF ALCOHOL &
SUBSTANCE ABUSE, INC.
DAVID SAFFER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
KATHERINE CHAMBERS, YOUTH COURT DIRECTOR
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
THOM RANDALL, *ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*
AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Loeb called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 9:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mrs. Wood and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the prior Committee meeting, subject to Correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Deanna Park, Director of the Countryside Adult Home, who distributed copies of the meeting agenda, a copy of which is also on file with the minutes.

Commencing the review with Agenda Item 1, Ms. Park presented a request to renew the contract with Hudson Headwaters Health Network for clinician services in the amount of \$12,109.89 per year. She advised the contract amount incorporated a 2% increase from the prior year and noted the agenda included a chart reflecting the contractual costs for several prior years. Ms. Park concluded there was funding available within the existing budget to support the contract.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. McDevitt and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned request and the necessary resolution was authorized for the December 16th Board meeting. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Park advised Agenda Item 2 consisted of a request for permission to abolish one full-time Account Clerk position, which was being vacated due to retirement, and create two part-time Account Clerk positions. She added that this action would incur a savings of approximately \$3,000 to \$8,000 annually.

Mr. Strainer questioned whether it would be difficult to fill the two part-time positions and Ms. Park replied that she was unsure, but noted that in the event that it was, she would return to the Committee to request that the full-time position be reinstated. Ms. Park explained the change was being requested in an effort to reduce Departmental costs by eliminating the benefits associated with the full-time position. Mr. Strainer then inquired as to the current salary for the full-time Account Clerk position and Ms. Park apprised it was slightly more than \$31,000.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the above referenced request and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Moving on to Agenda Item 3, Ms. Park requested permission to fill both part-time Account Clerk positions previously approved. She noted that these positions would provide an additional eight work hours per week, which were necessary to cover the duties of the Department.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol, seconded by Mrs. Wood and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill two part-time Account Clerk positions and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *Copies of both Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position forms are on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Bentley entered the meeting at 9:34 a.m.

Ms. Park announced that Agenda Item 4 consisted of a request for authorization to use Northern Mechanical Services (NMS) for cleaning of the two boilers at the Countryside facility at a cost of \$591.50. She advised the County currently contracted with Technical Building Services for this work and had received a quote of \$2,775 in December of 2010; she added that the price might actually be a little higher than anticipated because although they had attempted to solicit an updated quote, the company had been unresponsive. Ms. Park concluded that the potential to save more than \$2,000 for the services existed, provided they went outside of the current contract and used the services of an alternate company.

Mr. Strainer questioned when the contract with TBS expired and Ms. Park advised it was an annual contract but said she did not have the expiration date available. Paul Dusek, County Administrator, stated that the TBS contract should be reviewed to ensure they would not be violating the agreement by contracting with an alternate firm for these services, but added that if they were able to, it certainly made sense in light of the savings that could be attained. Ms. Park said there had also been issues with the services provided by TBS wherein they had been unable to fix an issue with the boiler operation after three visits and they had been forced to hire an alternate firm to provide the repair services. Mr. Dusek noted it might be appropriate to enter into an executive session to discuss whether or not to continue to retain the services of TBS, based on their performance history.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mrs. Wood and carried unanimously that executive session be declared to discuss the performance history of a particular corporation pursuant to Section 105(f) of the Public Officer's Law.

Executive session was held from 9:36 a.m. to 9:49 a.m.

Upon reconvening, motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to table the request to contract with NMS for boiler cleaning services, pending further review of the TBS contract to ensure it would not be violated by seeking said services from an alternate firm.

Concluding her review, Ms. Park outlined the Topics for Discussion portion of the agenda, as follows:

1. Overtime - Overtime figures were down 111.7 hours for the past two pay cycles which included the Veterans' Day holiday; this total reflected an overall decrease of 355.4 hours from the prior year.
2. Current Census - Residency consisted of 41 individuals, 16 men and 25 women.
3. Monthly Statistics - Two Long Term Resident referrals were received, one was awaiting Temporary Assistance approval and the other was currently on hold; there were no new admissions and one discharge. One referral for the Day Care program had been received and was currently pending.

There being no further Countryside business to discuss, privilege of the floor was extended to Margaret Sing-Smith, Youth Bureau Director, who distributed copies of her agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is also on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Sing-Smith advised her first request was for a transfer of funds between various codes in the amount of \$1,748 to cover dental and hospitalization benefit costs for a former employee who retired in August of 2011. She said she had reviewed this request with the Treasurer's Office and confirmed the transfer would cover benefit costs through the close of the current year.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the request for a transfer of funds and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Continuing to Item 2, Ms. Sing-Smith pointed out that the agenda included a copy of the 2012 Budget for the Warren County Youth Court, including the recent reinstatement of \$18,735 in County funding. She noted State funding contributions in the amount of \$11,236 had been estimated for disbursement to the Youth Court through the Youth Bureau in 2012; however, she added, these funds were not guaranteed and reflected a decrease from the 2011 State funding amount of \$18,746. Referring to the Budget documents included in the agenda, Ms. Sing-Smith cited an annual cost of \$72,920 was anticipated for 2012 Youth Court operations.

Ms. Sing-Smith apprised she had received requests from several individuals to set up a meeting to review the benefits of the programs being funded through the Youth Bureau. She said the next Youth Court meeting would be held on December 1st at 6:30 p.m. and a separate meeting had been scheduled for December 7th at 4:00 p.m. to discuss the benefits of the remaining programs; she added that any interested individuals were welcome to attend these meetings.

Mr. Dusek questioned what portion of the State funding attributed to Youth Programs was discretionary and Ms. Sing-Smith responded that the funding received was subject to distribution to the Towns of Warren County through an application process allowing funding for various qualifying programs. She apprised that in 2011, 12 municipalities had submitted applications for funding to provide supervised youth development opportunities, with funds being disbursed based on youth population. Ms. Sing-Smith approximated that of the \$52,000 in State funds received for Youth Programs, about \$21,000 had been distributed to the municipalities, leaving \$31,000 to be distributed at the Youth Bureau's recommendation. She reiterated that a reduction in State funding was anticipated for 2012, although the amount of the reduction was not yet known.

Referring to the Youth Court 2012 Budget documentation, Mr. Dusek noted the funding sources listed appeared to be incorrect as he recalled there should be an \$18,000 contribution from the County and \$9,000 from the Town of Queensbury, totaling \$27,000, which would not run the program for the year. Mr. Loeb stated that in reviewing

the information provided, there appeared to be a deficit in excess of \$40,000 in the Departmental operating budget which could potentially be closed by using the discretionary funding available.

Ms. Sing-Smith noted \$34,912 in Youth Bureau funds were planned to be distributed to four contract agencies in 2012 as follows:

Council for Prevention/Youth Court - \$18,746

Catholic Charities Counseling for Youth - \$8,038

Community Maternity Services Home Based Parent Education - \$4,848

Community Action Agency Alternative Sentencing Program - \$3,280

She noted that these could be considered the "discretionary" funds distributed as per the recommendation of the Youth Bureau.

Mr. Taylor pointed out that it did not appear contributions traditionally made by the Town of Warrensburg and City of Glens Falls had been accounted for in the operating budget and he noted that although he was unsure whether the Town of Warrensburg planned to repeat their donation, the City of Glens Falls did, as per a recent indication made by Mayor Diamond. Ms. Sing-Smith interjected that for 2011, the City of Glens Falls had contributed \$6,000 and the Town of Warrensburg \$1,000. Mr. Geraghty advised the Town of Warrensburg planned to provide funding for 2012, as well, upon receipt of a written request. Mr. Loeb questioned whether the Youth Bureau would forward such a letter and Ms. Sing-Smith replied in the negative, noting the funding was being sought by the Council for Prevention on behalf of the Youth Court Program; therefore, she said, it would be appropriate for that organization to draft the letter. Mr. Loeb advised that once established, the letter should be forwarded to the City of Glens Falls, as well, and Mr. Geraghty suggested the letter be forwarded to all of the Towns in Warren County seeking their support.

Mr. Dusek exited the meeting at 10:05 a.m.

Mrs. Wood pointed out that the Youth Bureau contracted with the Council for Prevention for the Youth Court Program and it was their budget that faced a shortfall; she added that if the Council wished to maintain their budget, they should be the organization developing and forwarding the letters seeking funding, rather than a County Department. She added that it seemed the Youth Bureau was doing a considerable amount of work to sustain the budget of an outside agency and she felt the Council should be applying as much energy to assist their efforts.

David Saffer, Executive Director of the Council for Prevention of Alcohol & Substance Abuse, Inc., apprised the original contract between the County and the Council had been developed 12 years prior to include administration services for the Youth Court program and did not include any fund raising efforts because funding support had not been an issue at that time. He noted there were other sources of funding for the program that had not been mentioned, some of those being the State Bar Association, which contributed \$2,500, the Warren County Bar Association, which contributed \$4,000, the Victim's Impact Panel, which contributed \$2,000. Mr. Saffer advised he did not know the exact deficit amount faced, but said these donations were the results of the Council's promotion efforts.

A brief discussion ensued, following which Ms. Sing-Smith was asked to work with Mr. Saffer to determine the exact deficit faced, as well as to develop a letter to be forwarded to the Towns in Warren County seeking funding contributions.

Mr. Geraghty observed that although the Youth Court Program was promoted as a benefit to the children of Warren

County, the documentation provided indicated that almost \$60,000 of the \$72,920 operating budget was designated for salary and benefit costs, which did not leave a lot of money for programs. He suggested the administrative salary costs be reduced in order to increase the program funding available.

Mr. Saffer announced the Council had recently trained 60 new youngsters to be Youth Court members, which was the largest group ever trained. He reiterated Ms. Sing-Smith's previous advisement that the next Youth Court meeting would be held on December 1st at 6:30 p.m. and they welcomed anyone interested in attending.

As the review of the Youth Bureau agenda was complete, privilege of the floor was extended to Suzanne Wheeler, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS), who distributed copies of her agenda to the Committee members. *A copy of the agenda is also on file with the minutes.*

Commencing with Agenda Item 1, Ms. Wheeler presented a request for a transfer of funds in the amount of \$1,200,000 to compensate for a shortfall in the Child Care Code and overestimates in the Medicaid code.

Mr. McDevitt noted the transfer was for an exceptional amount of money and he requested more information on the reasoning behind the request. Ms. Wheeler responded the expenditures in the Child Care Code which supported the Foster Care expenses were underestimated, necessitating the transfer. Mr. Bentley pointed out the Foster Care costs were far more due to the current procedure of using Berkshire Farms for placement of youth than they had been when the County had provided the services independently. Mr. McDevitt questioned the cost difference between the service provision procedures and Ms. Wheeler responded that she could not provide an exact cost analysis but said the services were far more costly when provided by Berkshire Farms. Mr. Loeb interjected that although the services would be provided at a lesser expense when administered by the County, it was not appropriate to attach a \$1.2 million savings to the change; he added that the transfer was necessary as the Child Care budget line had been underfunded, and the need for a transfer could not be tied solely to the increased costs associated with services provided by Berkshire Farms.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol, seconded by Mr. McDevitt and carried unanimously to approve the request for a transfer of funds and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Wheeler announced Agenda Item 2 consisted of a request for a transfer of funds in the amount of \$20,000 to cover a shortfall in overtime salaries; she noted the funds would be transferred from the overestimated Medicaid budget code.

JoAnn McKinstry, Assistant to the County Administrator, questioned why the Medicaid Code had been overestimated and Julie Montero, DSS Fiscal Manager, advised \$830,000 in Federal Medical Assistance Percent (FMAP) funding had been projected, but was not received, so the State had credited the weekly shares paid by the County, making them much less and leaving more funding in the Medicaid funding line than had been anticipated. Mrs. McKinstry recalled that the \$830,000 in FMAP funding had been included in the DSS Budget as a revenue, which was not going to be received, and Ms. Montero replied this was correct and that the matter had been discussed with the Treasurer's Office. After considering the matter further, Mrs. McKinstry pointed out that there was not actually an overestimate in the Medicaid Code as the revenues projected were less than anticipated due to the lack of FMAP funding. Ms. Montero advised the budget code being used in this situation received 95% State reimbursement, so the missing revenues would be made up through those reimbursements.

Mr. Strainer said he thought the DSS was doing very well in minimizing their overtime use, coming in under the

numbers for the previous year and he questioned how there could be a shortfall in overtime funding given this information. Ms. Wheeler responded that higher overtime use levels for the first half of the year, before they had begun adjusting staff schedules to avoid overtime costs, had caused the shortfall. She noted that the agenda included a copy of the Overtime Report which compared overtime usage for the current year against the amounts incurred in prior years. Mr. Strainer then asked if the overtime levels had been affected by reductions in staffing and Ms. Wheeler replied the majority could be attributed to the Child Protective Services (CPS) Division which had not been fully staffed for the beginning of the year. She added the CPS Division was now fully staffed and trained, so the overtime levels had decreased.

Mr. McDevitt inquired as to the predictability of Medicaid reimbursement costs and the associated County Share and Ms. Montero apprised that the numbers were typically definitive; however, she noted, Federal Stimulus funds had been provided for the current year, which had made the process confusing as instead of receiving a cash influx, the County Share payments had been reduced. Ms. Montero said the figures would be much easier to determine for 2012 as there was no Stimulus funding to consider.

Following further discussion, motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. McDevitt and carried unanimously to approve the request for a transfer of funds and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Moving on to Agenda Item 3, Ms. Wheeler presented a request for herself, Ms. Montero and several other supervisory staff members to attend the NYPWA (New York Public Welfare Association) 143rd Annual Winter Conference in Albany, NY on January 25 - 27, 2011. She advised NYPWA held semi-annual conferences which the supervisory staff typically attended.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to authorize the aforementioned travel request. *A copy of the executed Request to Attend Meeting or Convention form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Wheeler concluded the agenda review by outlining the Topics for Discussion section as follows:

1. The Overtime Report was discussed earlier in the meeting.
2. Ms. Wheeler noted the agenda included copies of the Expense and Revenue Budget Performance Reports and she said that other than the areas addressed by the fund transfer requests approved previously in the meeting, there were no issues to discuss.
3. In response to a question posed by Mr. Bentley, Ms. Wheeler advised Berkshire Farms staff continued to work at the Human Services Building. When asked whether this use of space was considered an illegal gift, Ms. Montero replied in the negative, explaining that Berkshire Farms paid a fee based on the amount of square footage occupied in the same manner as all other occupants of the Building. Ms. Wheeler apprised the agenda included a written assessment on the progress of their efforts to return to the previous Foster Care program model with child placements being administered by the County.

When asked to expound upon the written report, Chris Hanchett, Foster Care Supervisor, advised they were moving forward with their efforts to recruit and train foster parents, which would help to reduce Foster Care costs over the next year. He noted this process had been delayed by Berkshire Farms' recently implemented practice of placing foster children from other Counties in the same homes as Warren County foster children, which prevented them from immediately returning to the program being implemented at the County level. Mr. Hanchett stated that this combined housing practice made it much more difficult for the foster parent to transfer their affiliation and would

delay the process; he added that the combined housing practice was not part of the verbal agreement with Berkshire Farms.

Mr. Hanchett said they had developed a list of prospective foster homes that they would begin to train in January, resulting in an immediate savings to the County, but noted there would continue to be a number of foster children placed in Berkshire Farms homes as children with siblings already in those homes would be placed with them; additionally, he said, the placements were sometimes made at the direction of the Family Court, which could force the County to use Berkshire Farms placements. Mr. Hanchett advised this issue would cause a delay for the time being but would be eventually overcome, although it would likely be at least 12 to 18 months before all Berkshire Homes placements could be eliminated.

Mr. McDevitt asked if written notice had been provided to Berkshire Forms to note that they should not place Warren County foster children in the same foster homes as children from other Counties and Mr. Hanchett responded that they could not make this demand because the County did not have a written contract with Berkshire Farms. Mr. McDevitt then suggested that a written request be forwarded to Berkshire Farms asking that they cease this practice and Mr. Hanchett said he believed that would be possible. Mr. Hanchett added that they were trying to make the transition as easy as possible for all involved parties, but there seemed to be some misunderstandings about the reason for the change which were leading to hard feelings, which was unfortunate.

Discussion ensued.

There being no further business to discuss, on motion made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mrs. Wood, Mr. Loeb adjourned the meeting at 10:46 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist